

The Des Moines Register

Vilsack announces 'Great Places' initiative

March 28, 2005

Gov. Tom Vilsack today announced a new multi-agency initiative called Great Places, meant to preserve and promote communities or neighborhoods in Iowa that are great places to live and work.

Under the initiative, state agencies will partner with local communities to help pay for improvements and marketing. Three pilot projects will be selected by October.

"I don't know that there's any other state in the country that's considering this," Vilsack said.

Local communities will be asked to identify their strengths, including historic, cultural, retail, housing and so on, and design a program to capitalize on those strengths.

A series of eight regional forums will be conducted around the state beginning in May and local communities have until July to come up with ideas.

Vilsack has asked the Legislature for \$8 million to launch the program, which will be coordinated by the Department of Cultural Affairs.

The regional forums are scheduled in Clear Lake, Spencer, Council Bluffs, Pella, Cedar Falls, Muscatine, Cedar Rapids and Des Moines.

They will wrap up by June 2.